

News and Comment

AIBS: Emergency Meeting of Board Produces Steps Designed to Promote Financial Solvency and Confidence

But ah! disasters have their use . . .
[From a poem by Charles Stuart Calverly]

The governing board of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) held an emergency meeting last weekend in Washington and, with crisis as its catalyst, quickly devised a program to promote financial solvency and confidence in the organization.

AIBS, whose difficulties were described in this space last week, is still deep in the hole financially. But the board members seemed to share the feeling that they had done whatever could be done, and, accordingly, there was a fair measure of optimism that the salvage operation would succeed. The final answer, however, depends on whether the nation's biologists want an AIBS and are willing to pay for it.

Specifically, the board took the following steps: It acknowledged that AIBS is in debt to the National Science Foundation, and it agreed to repay \$100,000 within 30 days; it also agreed to pay, over a 3-year period, an additional amount that is still to be determined through audits and negotiations. No one is willing to estimate what the final total may be, but NSF contends that AIBS owes it at least \$331,570.

The board also agreed to undertake a direct membership campaign aimed at enrolling at least 30,000 biologists as direct members at dues of \$10 a year.

And the full-time administrative staff was reorganized. The post of executive director, which had been held by Hiden Cox since AIBS became an independent organization in 1955, was declared vacant. Its functions, "for the duration of the emergency," were assigned to

the AIBS executive committee, an elected body headed by AIBS's president, James D. Ebert. Cox was appointed "long-range planning officer to make recommendations directly to the Executive Committee on the future role of AIBS in the development of the biological sciences." Finances will be handled by a finance committee, headed by Paul Kramer, AIBS vice president. The day-to-day operations will be in the hands of John R. Olive, who will continue as deputy executive director; he will report to the executive committee. Charles A. Ossola will continue as general manager, reporting to the finance committee.

A start toward the \$100,000 which AIBS plans to repay this month was provided by about \$35,000 in "sustaining contributions" which AIBS members have made in response to an appeal that went out in December; another \$10,000 in gifts and interest-free loans was spontaneously pledged by some 30 of the governing board members at the meeting.

Ebert said he hopes the balance will be provided by direct membership fees; another possible source of funds would be the sale of the royalty rights to the AIBS film series, whose production contributed heavily to the organization's financial plight. It was reported to the board that the rights could bring in \$75,000, but Ebert said this was a "distress sale" price and represented about half the royalties that are ultimately anticipated.

Ebert, who ran the meeting with a firm hand and an implied threat that he was ready to quit if the board chose to quibble over the path to salvation, numbed his colleagues into a constructive frame of mind by opening the proceedings with a long and frank discussion of AIBS's plight. Thereafter, the board managed to pull together in a

manner unknown in earlier years, though these years were studded with warnings that financial disaster would overcome AIBS unless it achieved the solvency that it is now seeking.

After the meeting the board issued a statement in which Ebert expressed his confidence in Cox and Cox responded with praise for the board's action. Cox added, "I am excited by the role I feel I may be able to play, in company with all biologists, in charting the future of biology and thus strengthening all of science."

A critical question now is whether NSF will accept AIBS's repayment plan. NSF is withholding any statements until AIBS formally submits its proposals. But it is known that NSF is eager to see the organization get back on its feet, and it is not likely to impose hard terms as long as it has a reasonable assurance that the taxpayers' interests are protected.—D. S. GREENBERG.

Fellowship Expansion: Presidential Plan Criticized at Hearing before House Science, Space Committee

During each session of Congress the House Science and Astronautics Committee invites a panel of distinguished scientists and engineers to think aloud on relations between science and government. The 16-member panel met with the committee last week, and the most notable outcome, perhaps, was a display of sharp disagreement with the Kennedy administration's recent proposals for expanding graduate enrollments in engineering, mathematics, and the physical sciences [*Science* 138, 1314 (1962)]. The basis of the disagreement was the contention that the proposals would succeed only at the price of reducing quality.

This conclusion was by no means unanimous, nor is it reasonable to assume that the panel exercises any significant leverage on the overall sentiments of Congress. The panel is Congress's only formalized channel for communicating with the scientific community, and in a superficial way it is the legislative counterpart of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC). But while PSAC, from the vantage point of the White House, radiates a far-reaching influence, the Science and Astronautics Committee is only one of a dozen or so congressional committees